

CIGARETTE: Makers recruit UA students

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A front-page story in The News on Jan. 26 reported that African-Americans are far more likely than other racial groups to develop lung cancer even if they smoke the same amount.

Why, then, did the University of Alabama roll out the red carpet last month for the Marlboro man, in the rotunda of the journalism school? Amid the College of Communication and Information Sciences Hall of Fame, which honors great men and women of Alabama such as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Helen Keller, 10 job recruiters from Philip Morris USA hosted a catered reception for some two dozen students to tout the benefits of working for America's No. 1 cigarette manufacturer.

If hired as summer interns or full-time territory sales managers, these future University of Alabama graduates, who themselves are highly unlikely to smoke, will be working to reinforce the nicotine addiction of countless young, poor and less-educated Alabamians.

The lead recruiter of the group, UA alumna Tiffany Elliott, spoke eloquently about Philip Morris' core values, integrity and social responsibility. Nor did she deny that cigarettes cause lung cancer and a host of other diseases. "We're very honest about what we do," she told me. "We know the product we have causes harm. We haven't always been honest about that. Our culture has definitely changed." And she was most adamant that "we don't want to pull in children."

The Philip Morris recruitment brochure distributed at the school highlights its Youth Smoking Prevention campaign, which portrays cigarettes as strictly an adult custom that parents should discuss with their children. But every parent already knows that teenagers seek rebellious and risk-taking ways to reject authority, so such a campaign may make smoking even more appealing to young people.

Nonetheless, at least one UA student at the reception supports the company's approach. "Yeah, Philip Morris sells cigarettes," he said, "but they also help prevent children from smoking."

As various legal restrictions have been placed on cigarette advertising and sponsorships, tobacco companies have shifted their marketing budgets to the retail point of purchase, as well as to promotions in bars and clubs where they enroll young adults for direct-mail discount offers and other gifts. The ubiquitous bar promotions are not mentioned in the Philip Morris recruitment brochure.

To reach its youthful consumers, then, Philip Morris USA has stepped up its recruitment on college campuses, cultivating ties with 35 universities across the country. The University of Alabama has the dubious distinction of being the sole institution of higher learning in our state which has put out the welcome mat for a tobacco company to recruit its students.

In addition to receptions and presentations in the College of Communications, Philip Morris USA has gained access to classes at the Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration and has addressed student



groups. At last month's Career Day, the company was one of just two out of more than 100 to have its logo prominently printed in the job fair's program and to be given special thanks by the university.

Barred from Career Day

Perhaps this special relationship can explain why I was barred by a UA administrator from observing this year's Career Day, at which both Philip Morris USA and the RJ Reynolds Tobacco Co. were given prominent space to meet and greet hundreds of Alabama students.

Over the past 30 years, during the course of my research on the tobacco industry, I have attended and studied hundreds of events in all 50 states that have been sponsored in whole or in part by cigarette companies. The stepped-up involvement of Philip Morris on the University of Alabama campus confirms findings of my published research, namely that cigarette manufacturers have succeeded in forging close ties to academia as a means of assuring the future strength of cigarette sales in the face of medical admonitions against smoking.

Although the UA administration has thus far declined to reveal the full nature and extent of its dealings with the maker of Marlboro, the effort to prevent one of its own professors from gathering information on the way the tobacco industry attracts students is a clear violation of academic freedom. If university administrators intend to lend their support to Gov. Bob Riley's initiatives aimed at reducing the high cost of health care and preventing disease, then playing up to cigarette company recruiters is antithetical to this mission.

At the University of Alabama, the medical school is entrusted with protecting public health, while the business and communications colleges appear to be protecting the health of cigarette companies. Perhaps I am too naive. But 40 years after the surgeon general's report, it's not hard to see why we have failed to end the smoking pandemic.

Philip Morris USA recruiters will return to the University of Alabama Ferguson Student Center on Tuesday.

UAE: A naval hub for our operations in Iraq

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countries to recognize the Taliban government of Afghanistan as legitimate, and it opposes the supposed pro-Israel tilt of U.S. foreign policy. Based solely on this information, the situation sounds dire. But it fails to reveal the entire story.

The Bush administration has noted accurately that the UAE is a key ally since 9/11 in the U.S.-led war on terrorism. It is a naval hub for our operations in Iraq, and it was the first Middle Eastern country to join the U.S.-sponsored Container Security Initiative and Megaports Initiative, which are designed to secure the global supply chain against weapons of mass destruction proliferation. The UAE may not rise to the level of a responsible trading partner such as Great Britain, but the situation is not as threatening as some would suggest. In a time of Middle Eastern turmoil, the UAE has worked to engage the United States while other nations have taken increasingly hard-line positions and promoted extremists into positions of power. We need more of the former and less of the latter.

Red flags

Nevertheless, the Dubai deal raises a number of red flags in a policy process that should concern our lawmakers. The CFIUS is composed of the secretaries of state, treasury, defense and homeland security, among others. Under an amendment passed in 1993, the committee is required to conduct an additional investigation into matters of foreign investment where the acquiring firm is controlled by or acting on behalf of a foreign government or if the acquisition would affect our national security. The Dubai deal appears to rise to this level, yet media reports note that key administration officials were unable to explain why the additional investigation did not occur. Equally troubling is that secretaries John Snow, Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld and Michael Chertoff were reported as unaware of the deal until many days after it had been approved. It is common practice for representatives of department secretaries to represent them at



Workers at the Tioga Marine Terminal in Philadelphia say business shouldn't be affected by a United Arab Emirates-based group's plans to buy a stake in their company.

CFIUS meetings, but it is alarming that a deal of this significance went unmentioned to the individuals who actually serve on the committee. In the post-Katrina environment, this does not classify as a confidence-building measure.

Given this, is not unreasonable for members of Congress to want an additional investigation. As South Carolina Sen. Lindsay Graham noted, "This process has been flawed from the beginning, and it needs to be fixed." Even Colin Powell has argued that someone should have recognized the political implications of the deal and engaged in the proper briefings. Some in Congress have expressed concern that a delay in the deal might damage our strategic partnership with UAE, but a more astute observation might be that decision-makers in the UAE can learn more about the democratic process in America and how our system of government respects the co-equal branches of power.

At this point, it is not clear whether the UAE deal should occur. In the weeks to come, our officials must avoid recalcitrance for its own sake. A more thorough 45-day investigation will provide time to gain a

broader understanding of the issue. President Bush has pledged his first-ever veto of any action blocking the deal, but a wiser strategy would be to re-examine the facts at hand and re-assess the situation following the investigation. If investigations reveal evidence that the acquisition would harm our national security, the deal must be opposed. If no such evidence is found, then the Dubai deal likely will be on par with many of our other ports, which are controlled by companies based in China and Singapore. If the deal goes through, Americans should take comfort in the fact that Customs authorities and the Coast Guard (all under the aegis of the Department of Homeland Security), will remain responsible for the security of our ports and the trade that traffics through them. On the security front, little changes.

Reasonable people may disagree on the implications of the Dubai deal, but our leaders must ensure that decisions are based on a thorough investigation and in-depth understanding of the measures in place to secure the global supply chain and our U.S. ports. Anything less is a disservice to the people of the United States.

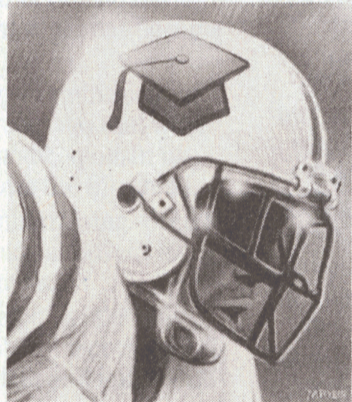
Make: Grades key to bright future

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opportunities you have been given." Those were, and are, some of the messages I took from my mom and tried to incorporate as a part of me. She always emphasized the importance of education. She knew good grades were the key to a brighter future. She had high expectations, and we knew that anything less than a "B" was unacceptable. We also knew if we were capable of bringing home "A's," we had better land the "A." My mom backed up her words with her actions. She worked two jobs most of my life, so my brothers and sisters would have those things and those opportunities we needed. Thank you, Mom.

To my teammates: Guys, it's been a wild ride. I know the bond we share will never be broken, no matter how far the distance between us. I can't imagine a better group of friends to spend my college days with. I wish you all the best in life after football.

To my coaches back at Jess Lanier High School and at the University of Alabama: Thank you for the football skills you taught me and for giving me a chance to hone them on both the practice fields and in the game arena. I'd also like to thank the staff of the athletic department at UA for its support, encouragement and willingness to assist in all of our



endeavors as student-athletes — always expecting our personal best.

One of the things I always tried to emphasize to the high school recruits during their campus visits was the need to take care of the academic side of their lives as student-athletes. As student-athletes on scholarship, we've been given a wonderful opportunity to earn an education. It's vital we don't waste it. If you want to succeed as a student-athlete — not just on the football field or on the court — but in the classroom, the UA staff will do its best to help you achieve your academic goals. But, you have to want it and dedicate yourself to it. Set academic, as well as athletic, goals.

I had a goal to graduate within four years, and I earned my management degree with six months to spare. We all have different goals and different abilities, but we can all do our best. The university has invested millions of dollars in the Paul W. Bryant Academic Center, which was available to me at the end of my college career. I know it stands as a symbol of commit-

ment to all Tide athletes, now and in the future, that they will have every opportunity to succeed academically if they make that a priority in their lives. The support is there if each student-athlete commits to that success.

To my teachers back in Bessemer and to the faculty at the University of Alabama, thank you for your high expectations and for the encouragement you gave to me and my fellow students on a daily basis. Teachers have one of the toughest jobs, and I thank them for all they are doing for the next generation of leaders of our state and nation.

You hear a lot about what's wrong with young people today, and we sometimes focus on the problems in college sports rather than successes. I am grateful the University of Alabama and many other organizations look for success stories and honor accomplishments and don't solely focus on winning or losing a ballgame. Don't get me wrong: I love to win. I am energized by athletic competition. But I know when the game is over, making the grade and making a difference in the lives of others are the ultimate blessings.

DeMeco Ryans was awarded the NCAA's Top VIII Award, recognizing outstanding achievement in athletics, scholarship and community service that is given each year to only eight student-athletes nationwide. Ryans is presently training in anticipation of April's NFL draft. Follow Ryans on his Web site at www.demecoryans.net

WAITING: Issue never made it to 'front burner'

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situations of these families and have tried to meet their needs. Simply put, this issue never made it to the front burner until the lawsuit moved forward and hundreds of families and advo-

cates brought the issue to the forefront.

The legal argument King wants to test would be better applied to some other case, one not causing such a dire impact for our most needy citizens. King's strategy will be sure to prolong the case for years before any resolution is reached.

King and the governor have it in their power to assure that people on waiting lists will no longer be ignored. It is not

enough for Gov. Bob Riley and King to promise they will "try" to fund these programs in future years. Changes in leadership occur, and the state of the economy varies.

The governor and attorney general must prioritize the provision of needed services to people with disabilities. They must ensure that vulnerable people will receive the services they deserve as Alabama citizens.

In the meantime, people wait.

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